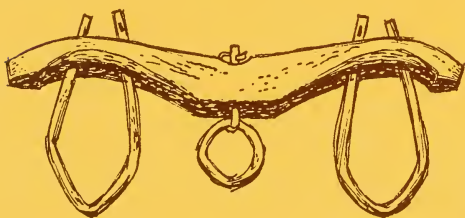



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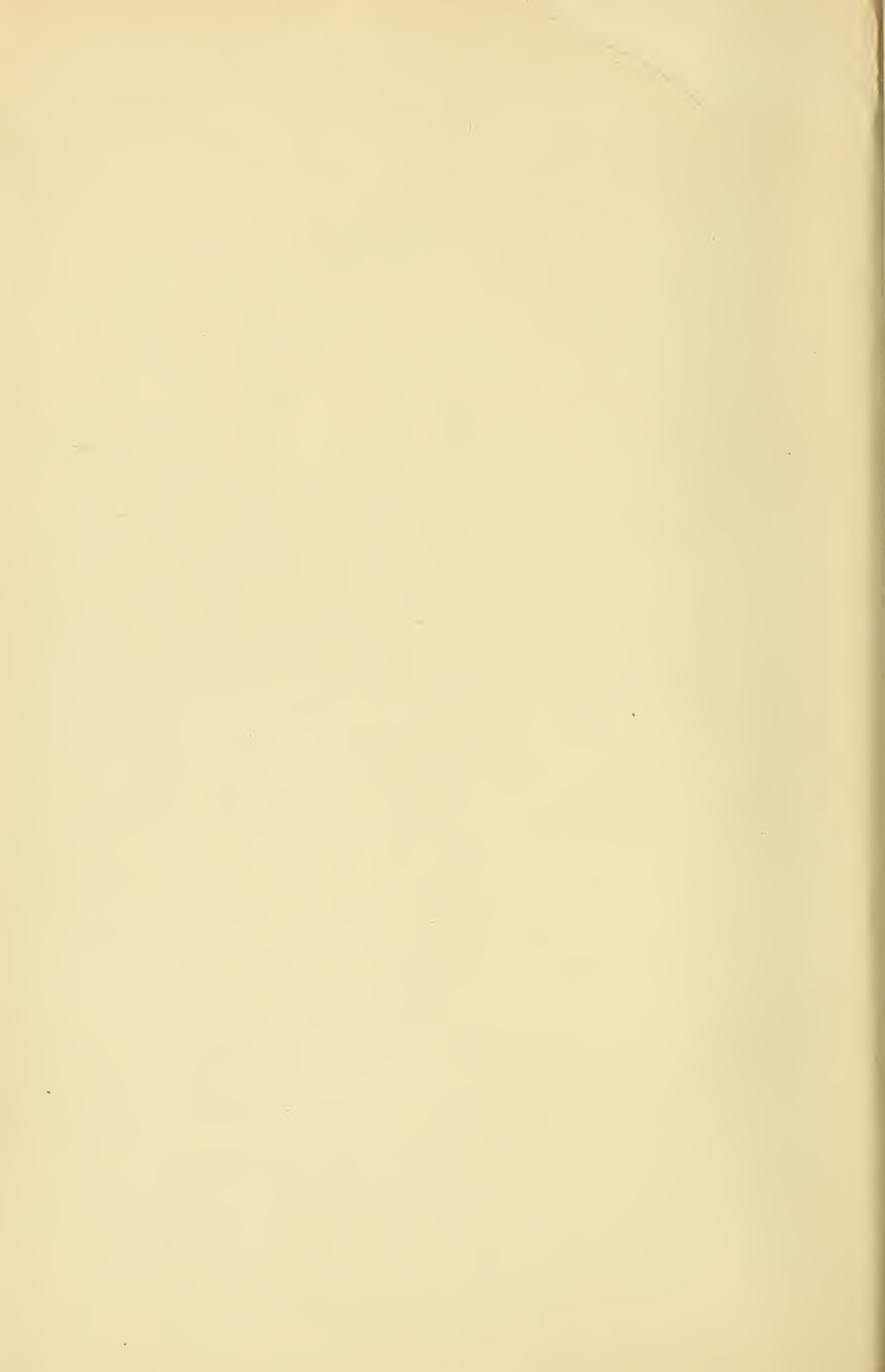


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Personal Reminiscences
of
Abraham Lincoln









PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BY

SMITH STIMMEL

*A Member of The Union Light Guard, personal escort of
President Lincoln*

*President of Dakota Territorial Council 1889
Past Judge Advocate General and
Patriotic Instructor of the National G.A.R.*

With Introduction by

ELL TORRANCE

*Commander-in-Chief of
The Grand Army of the Republic 1901-1902*

MINNEAPOLIS

WILLIAM H. M. ADAMS

1928

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Introduction

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN, by the Honorable Smith Stim-
mel, constitute a real, valuable, and most inter-
esting addition to all that has been written
relating to the life and character of the great
American.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Mr. Stim-
mel was a student in the public schools of Co-
lumbus, Ohio, after which he entered the Ohio
Wesleyan University. In 1863 he was honored
by being selected as one of a Company of one
hundred men, to be known as the Lincoln Body-
guard, with headquarters near the White House
in Washington. This brought Sergeant Stimmel
in almost daily observation of the President, and
furnished an opportunity for a study of Lincoln
that fell to the lot of but few.

The REMINISCENCES are largely personal and
original, and reveal Abraham Lincoln at close
range and in his everyday life. They are given

Introduction

in a style so simple and genuine that the reader will feel that he is in the very presence of Mr. Lincoln, and he will be so interested in the story that the end will be reached entirely too soon.

ELL TORRANCE

*Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Army
of the Republic 1901-1902*

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

January 1, 1928

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I

Lincoln at Columbus



I

Lincoln at Columbus

THE first time I had the pleasure of seeing and hearing Abraham Lincoln was at Columbus, Ohio, during the month of February, 1861, when on his way from his home in Illinois to Washington to assume the office and duties of the Presidency. Everybody along the route had a great desire to see Lincoln. The coming of a President of the United States would naturally attract great attention at any time, but in this instance the interest was peculiar.

Previous to his nomination to the Presidency the summer before, Mr. Lincoln was comparatively a new man in national politics. Some years before he had served one term in Congress, but from that he had dropped back into private life, and was not much heard of again outside of his own State, until he challenged Stephen A. Douglas to meet him in joint debate upon the issues of the day in a State campaign in Illinois in 1858, at which time Mr. Lincoln and Mr.

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Douglas were competing candidates for the United States Senate. That debate attracted general attention throughout the country, but even then there were so many conflicting stories as to just what kind of man Lincoln was, that the people had a very vague idea concerning him. Mr. Douglas was a well-known public character, a United States Senator from Illinois, a noted stump speaker, a ready debater, and one of the national leaders of the Democratic Party at that time. But who was this man Lincoln, lately sprung into public notice — rated by some of the opposition of that day as “a third-rate country lawyer, an uncouth ignoramus” — who would dare to challenge and meet in debate on the great issues of the day their “Little Giant,” as Mr. Douglas’s friends were pleased to style him? Suffice it to say, Lincoln sustained himself so well in that memorable debate that it had much to do with making him the Republican nominee for the Presidency two years later.

The Presidential campaign of 1860 was a very exciting and intensely interesting one, in which

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everybody, including the children in the public schools, seemed to take an active part. The discussions upon the issues of the campaign were warm and enthusiastic everywhere. On all occasions, in season and out of season, wherever two or three of opposite politics chanced to meet, in church, at camp-meeting, on the public highway, even sometimes at funerals, a lively discussion of the issues or of the relative merits of the candidates was sure to spring up.

There were a number of candidates for the Presidency in the field that year, of whom Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Douglas were the two leading ones. The cartoonists had their inning then as they have now. The peculiar characteristics of Mr. Lincoln made him a splendid subject for the cartoonists. His long arms and legs, his leanness of flesh, his big nose and mouth, and his disheveled hair were distinguishing features for the exaggerations of the cartoonists. The opposition labored to make him appear ridiculous, but the friendly cartoonists were equal to the emergency, and often turned these striking char-

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acteristics to his advantage, and put them in such form as to give him great favor with the people.

Among other things Lincoln was known as the "Rail Splitter Candidate," because in his young manhood he had helped to split some rails that were used to fence his father's little farm. But there was one feature of his character that was brought out, which, next to his statesmanlike ability, was made more prominent by his friends than any other, and that was his honesty. "Honest Abe Lincoln" became household words; not a syllable of reflection could be urged against his integrity by his bitterest antagonists.

After such a campaign and such a presentation of candidates, it is easy to understand the intense desire on the part of the people to see the winner in that great battle of the giants, the man of whom they had heard so much, and of whom they had previously known so little.

So it was arranged by the committee having in charge the train that conveyed Mr. Lincoln and his family to Washington to make generous

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stops at central points along the way, in order that as many as possible might see and hear him. Columbus was one of those points. I was then a lad well up in my teens, attending one of the public schools in that city. The schools of the city were all dismissed and given a holiday the day Lincoln was to be there. There would be no use trying to keep children in school the day Lincoln was to be in town.

I was with the crowd that gathered at the station to see his train come in. While waiting for his train, I heard some one in the crowd remark that Mr. Lincoln would probably be in the rear car, and would be apt to come out of the rear end of that car. I took the hint and edged my way through the crowd to about where I thought the rear car would be when the train stopped. Sure enough, when the train pulled in, about two o'clock, I was within a few feet of the rear end of the rear car. In a few minutes the reception committee with their distinguished guest appeared upon the rear platform, Mr. Lincoln towering head and shoulders above them

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all. He did not need to be introduced; everybody knew him when they saw him. The shouts of the multitude and the waving of hats and handkerchiefs were great. He stood for a few minutes, smiling and bowing to the people; but the deep care-worn lines in his tired-looking face were very marked, and were the subject of remark by every one who was close enough to observe them.

Lincoln was then conducted to an open carriage near by, and the procession moved down the broad avenue leading to the Capitol where he was to speak. The procession was long, and filled the street from curb to curb. Along the route every doorway and window and the tops of buildings were crowded with people eager to get a glimpse of Lincoln. In order that the people might get a better view of him, the committee in charge induced him to stand up as the carriage moved slowly along, and with uncovered head he remained standing until they reached the Capitol grounds, bowing modestly to the people right and left as he passed along, while the people

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shouted a glad and joyous welcome to their chosen chief.

Boylike, I worked my way as near to the head of the procession as possible, that I might see Mr. Lincoln every step of the way and get as near where he was to speak as possible, in order to hear what he had to say. He spoke from the western steps of the Capitol. His speech was necessarily brief, but there was one expression, characteristic of the man, which so impressed me at the time that I have never forgotten it. In the course of his remarks he said, "I hope that if my worthy competitor, Judge Douglas, had been elected and were here in my place at this time, you would be extending to him the same cordial greeting you are now giving me." Boy as I was, when I heard those generous words fall from his lips, my stock in Abraham Lincoln — already of high estimate — went up about five hundred per cent. In the midst of the honors shown him he did not forget his competitor, though of a different political faith. Not a word reflecting upon the political status of any indi-

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vidual or party fell from his lips that day. The tenor of his remarks was to the effect that his mission was to serve all the people of the whole nation, and not a part only.

At the conclusion of his speech it was announced that Mr. Lincoln would take his stand on one of the grand stairways in the rotunda of the Capitol, and that the people, by passing through the broad doorway in front and out at the other side, would be able to get a nearer view of the President-elect, and he would be glad to see them, for the concourse of people was so great that thousands could not get within hearing distance when he spoke. Again I was in line with the procession to get another view of the great man. I remember how at the time I thought he was the greatest man I had ever seen.

To see Lincoln was to feel closely drawn to him. His personal appearance and his manner, so perfectly natural, absolutely free from anything like ostentation, and yet so manly, made every one feel instinctively that he was preëminently a man of the people. There was an air of

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freedom and good humor in all that was said and done. It was an occasion for many humorous and jocular remarks. As the great crowd passed by, every one seemed to feel good-natured and had something amusing to say. Some would wave a hand at him and call out, "How are you, Abe?" and other similar expressions of familiarity; and he would wave his big hand back with a generous smile, indicating that he appreciated the good fellowship manifested toward him. In my mind's eye I can see his tall form, as he stood on that stairway, with his big bony hands resting upon the marble balustrade.

While at the Capitol that afternoon, Mr. Lincoln appeared before a joint session of the legislature, where he made a short speech. That evening he attended a reception held in his honor, and the next morning he left Columbus en route for Pittsburgh.

The dark cloud that hung so threateningly over this nation at that time soon burst forth in all its fury. It is necessary to recall the magnitude of the Civil War, the disadvantages under which

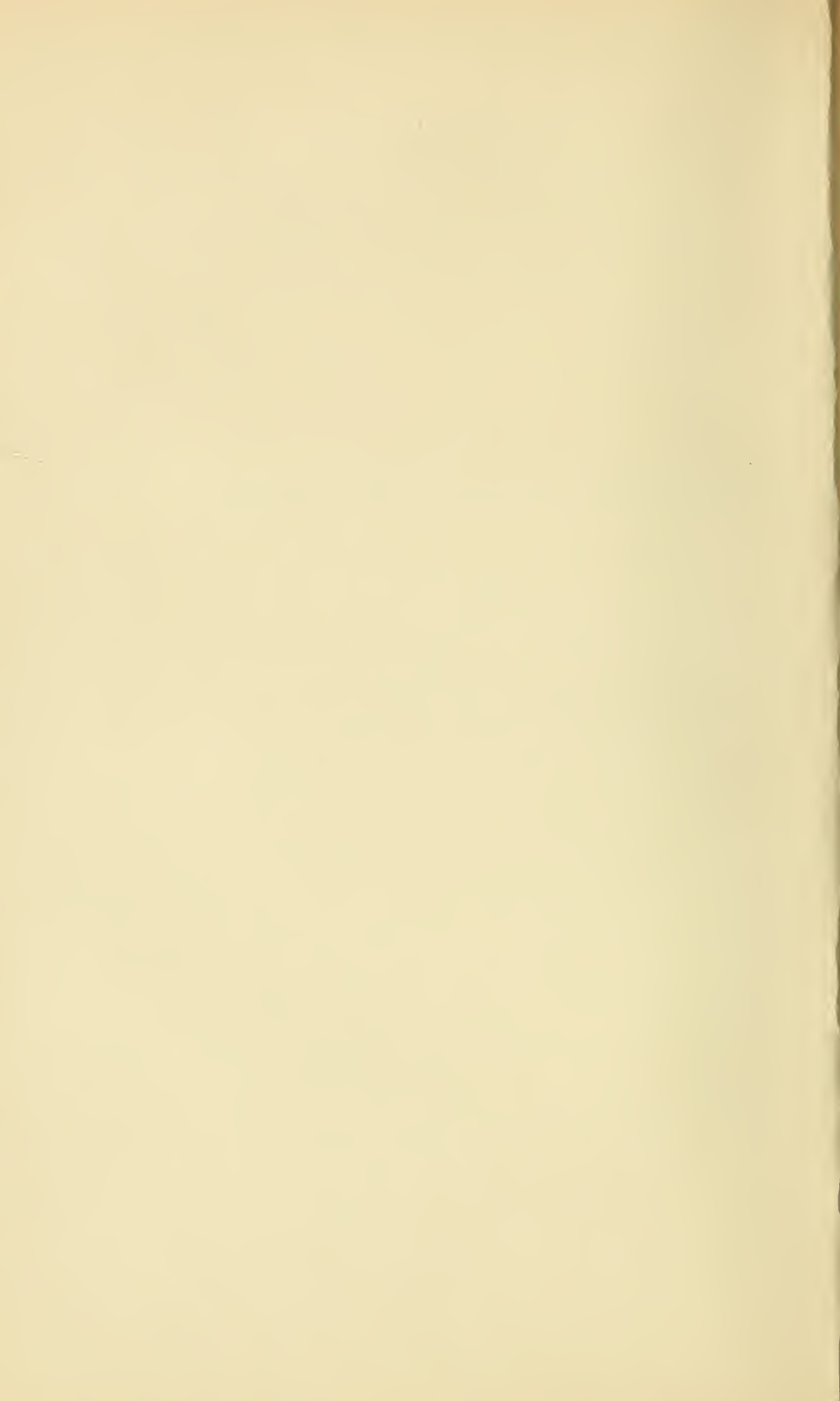
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it was carried on by the Government during the first two years, our total lack of preparation — no army and no navy worthy of the names, no money in the Treasury and practically no credit, a strong opposition in the North and an organized armed foe in the South — to be able to realize in some measure the needed wisdom and sagacity on the part of the man upon whom the great burden of that awful responsibility rested.

The American people owe a debt of gratitude to the memory of Abraham Lincoln that they can never pay, for I verily believe, the fact that we are a united people to-day is, under God, due to Mr. Lincoln's marvelous wisdom and sagacity in directing the affairs of State during those perilous times.

II

Lincoln's Mounted Bodyguard



II

Lincoln's Mounted Bodyguard

THE cavalry troop which was assigned to duty as President Lincoln's bodyguard, of which I had the honor to be a member, was organized by Governor David Tod of Ohio in 1863. During that summer, a very critical period of the war, Governor Tod had occasion to visit Washington, and when he called at the White House, he became impressed with the idea that the President was not sufficiently protected. It was well known that there were many Confederate sympathizers in Washington at that time, some of them very bitter toward the North, and especially toward Mr. Lincoln, on account of his strong determination to save the Union.

Acting upon the idea of making provision for the better protection of the President, Governor Tod applied to the Secretary of War for, and received, permission to organize a troop of cavalry of one hundred men, to be assigned to duty as the President's Mounted Bodyguard.

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There were eighty-eight counties in Ohio, and to give each county in the State a representation in such a troop, the Governor addressed a circular letter to each of the military committees of the several counties in the State, asking them to send in the name of a man they would recommend to become a member of a cavalry troop "for highly honorable and strictly confidential service," as he put it, but did not state what that service was to be.

I had already served a three months' term in the army, but at that time was at my home on the farm near Columbus. I was contemplating entering the service again, when my attention was called to the Governor's letter, and I was asked if I was willing to enter that service. I told them that I was, if the Governor would accept me. One of the members of the Military Committee of our county was a near neighbor of ours. He gave me a letter of recommendation, which I took and presented to the Governor in person, and was accepted.

It was a troop of splendid men. Most of them

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had, like myself, been in the service before. Some of them carried wounds they had received in action. Some of them had been commissioned officers in their former service, captains and lieutenants, and one of them had been a major.

When the organization had been completed, we were all supplied with black horses, and sent to Washington and placed on duty at the White House. Governor Tod named the Company, "The Union Light Guard." Our duties were to guard the front entrance to the White House grounds, and to act as an escort to the President, whenever he went out in his carriage or on horseback, as he often did during the summer, but not much during the winter months.

Those who may be familiar with the situation of the White House know that it fronts north on Pennsylvania Avenue, and that it sets back some little distance from the street. There are two gateways, one on the east and one on the west, which open from the avenue to a semi-circular driveway leading to the front door of the White House. Two mounted guards were

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stationed at each of these gates. These guards were always under the immediate command of a non-commissioned officer — a sergeant or a corporal — and his post, when on such duty, was dismounted at the front door of the White House. While dismounted, his horse was tied to a hitching place connected with the large portico over the front entrance. I was a sergeant, and, when on duty, my post was at that place. Of course these guards served by reliefs in regular military fashion.

In addition to our mounted guard, there was an infantry company, detailed from a Pennsylvania regiment of "Bucktails," as they were called, because they all wore bucktails in their hats. This infantry company guarded the south side and east and west ends of the White House.

We enjoyed our summer work much more than we did the winter guard duty. During the hot summer months the President made his home out at the Soldiers' Home north of the city, and a little beyond the city limits, on a slightly elevated plat of ground, well shaded by

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a beautiful grove. There was a modest two-story brick dwelling connected with the Soldiers' Home property, which was set apart for the President's summer quarters. It was a pleasant country place, where the President could get a good night's rest, which he very much needed; but that was about all the comfort he got out of it. Our company furnished him an escort out in the evening and back to the White House in the morning. We had tents out there in the grove for our sleeping quarters.

This part of the service gave us an opportunity to see a good deal of the everyday life of the President, as he appeared in his everyday clothes, when off duty, so to speak. He was never really off duty, but it was a time when he could relax a little. Often during the early part of the evening, after he had had his evening meal, he would take a stroll down along the edge of the grove where our tents were pitched, and have a little chat with the Lieutenant in command, and sometimes he would look into the men's tents, and have a passing word with them,

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asking them if they were comfortably fixed, or something of that kind. We always felt that the President took a personal interest in us. He never spoke absent-mindedly, but talked to the men as if he were thinking of them.

As already stated, Lincoln was very tall, standing about six feet four inches in his stocking-feet; spare of flesh; large bones and strong frame; dark complexion; big hands and feet; large, expressive mouth; large, well-formed nose; prominent cheek-bones; black, coarse hair; eyes of a blueish gray, rather deep-sunken, and of sad expression when at repose, but when animated with something of special interest, they would light up with special brilliancy.

President Lincoln was not very careful about the style and fit of his everyday clothes, and evidently his everyday suit was not made to order, for his arms always seemed too long for his coat-sleeves and his legs too long for his trousers. His summer coat was usually a cheap, black alpaca, which hung quite loosely upon him. He wore an old-fashioned stovepipe silk hat, which

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showed that it had seen considerable service. It had several dents in it, and the fur or nap was usually rubbed the wrong way.

I often wondered why the fur on the President's hat was generally so mussed up, and finally I had an opportunity to see what caused it — at least in part. One evening, when we were going with the President out to his summer home, we met an army officer on horseback in full-dress uniform, bright and new, sash and shining belt, and a well-adjusted military hat with a bright gold cord on it. His horse was rigged out with all the trappings belonging to an officer of rank and in keeping with the rider. As he approached us, he recognized the man in the carriage as the President, and raised his hat with all the grace and dignity that only a trained military man can. The President was busy looking over some papers as he rode along, and did not notice that he was being saluted by an officer, until he was almost past, when he glanced up and saw the lifted hat. He threw up his long arm and knocked off his tall hat, and then tumbled it back on his head,

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and brought his big hand down on the crown to press it firmly in place. That was his return salute, and it was easy to see what rubbed up the fur on that hat. But I don't want you to get the idea that President Lincoln always saluted that way. That was a hurry-up salute. It was his business to get that hat off quickly, and the quickest way he could get it off was to knock it off.

But I had occasion to know that the President could give a graceful salute. My mount was a handsome black mare, but one of the most vicious animals I ever saw; and although I had gotten her under fairly good control, every once in a while she would take a tantrum, and at such times it was a fight to the finish between her and me. One morning, while we were coming in with the President from his summer home, and just as we left the home grounds and turned into the street leading into the city, she started on one of her tantrums. It was a little down grade at that point. There had been a shower of rain that morning before starting, just enough to make it slippery. The coachman was pushing on the

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reins and was going down grade at pretty good speed. I noticed that my mare was feeling a little frisky and seemed to enjoy the time we were making, when suddenly she lunged forward and started down the street on a dead run. She fairly flew past the President's carriage. I was doing my best to check her; the large army bridle bits we used were severe enough to almost break a horse's jaw, and, although I made the blood run from her mouth in a stream, it seemed to make no impression in the way of checking her. She ran like mad, and I began to feel that for once I had lost control of her. I was afraid that, as we got down the street where there were more vehicles and pedestrians, she would run into somebody and do some great damage — possibly kill some one; and for a moment I thought I would be under the necessity of pulling my revolver and shooting her in the back of the head to stop her.

There was a double track of old-fashioned flat street-car rails on the street, such as were in use in those days of horse-cars, and, while thoughts

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were flashing through my mind as to what I should do to stop the brute, in her mad flight she took a diagonal course across the street, and those flat rails being wet and slippery, she slipped and, with a tremendous slide, fell and struck the ground with an awful thud. When her body struck Mother Earth, she stopped. It almost knocked the breath out of her when she went down, but I stayed in the saddle, with both of my feet touching the ground. She lay there only long enough to catch her breath, and then jumped up, taking me with her. She gave her head an angry shake, but her tantrum was over — she had had enough for that time. I turned her about and went back to join the escort.

As I approached the President's carriage, I saluted the President, as was our custom whenever meeting him; and in return, he lifted his hat in the most exquisite manner, and bowed with a gracious smile. So I happened to know that the President could give a graceful salute. Of course that salute was given somewhat as a fatherly pat on the back, as much as to say,

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“Young man, I am glad to see you come out on top in that fracas”; for he had seen that mare take tantrums before, but possibly not quite so bad.

An amusing little incident occurred out at the Soldiers' Home one evening, which we always called “The Pigtail Story.” Our duties, of course, were principally guard duties, and if there is any one thing that becomes more irksome than another to the average soldier, it is continuous guard duty. Under it soldiers are liable to become restless and sometimes fractious, especially when there are stirring times at the front.

There came a time during the early summer of 1864 when the men of our Company became very restless. There were reports of great activity at the front, and we longed to be in it. So one evening, when the President was strolling near the men's tents, emboldened by his kindly manner, one of the men took it upon himself to approach him in regard to the matter of a change of service, stating in substance that the men felt

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that they were not needed where they were, and that there was greater need of their services at the front.

The President listened patiently to all the man had to say, and then with a twinkle in his eye said, "Well, my boy, that reminds me of an old farmer friend of mine in Illinois, who used to say he never could understand why the Lord put a curl in a pig's tail; it did not seem to him to be either useful or ornamental, but he guessed the Lord knew what he was doing when he put it there. I do not myself," he said, "see the necessity of having soldiers traipsing around after me wherever I go, but Stanton" — referring to Secretary of War Stanton — "who knows a great deal more about such things than I do, seems to think it is necessary, and he may be right; and if it is necessary to have soldiers here, it might as well be you as some one else. If you were sent to the front, some one would have to come from the front to take your place." Then, in a tone of mild rebuke, he added, "It is a soldier's duty to obey orders without question, and in doing that

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you can serve your country as faithfully here as at the front, and," said he, with another smile, "I reckon it is not quite as dangerous here as it is there." And with a gentle wave of his hand, he passed on.

The other boys had the laugh on the good fellow's brave effort to get to the front, but you can rest assured that no other member of that Company ever ventured to carry any further complaints to the President about their service.

President Lincoln was as indifferent concerning his livery outfit as he was about his everyday clothes. The carriage he used for everyday purposes was about on a par with the average street hack, and his coach team was a pair of what anybody would call very common horses; but he had a barouche that was used on state occasions that was a pretty respectable vehicle. He did not have a saddle horse of his own at all, and when he wished to go out on horseback, as he sometimes did, he would send word to our quarters that when we came, to bring with us a saddle horse for him, and we would rig up one of our Com-

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pany horses for his use. We had in the Company a long-legged, high-headed horse that was pretty well gaited and fairly well suited for the President's equestrian figure; and because of that horse's tail and angular make-up, the boys called him "Abe," after the President. Our greatest difficulty was in getting stirrup-straps adjusted for the President. We would let them out to the end hole, and then he would have to kink up his legs to get his feet in the stirrups. When he mounted that horse, with his tall hat extending high in the air, he was indeed an interesting figure. We enjoyed seeing him on his "high horse," as we used to say. He was a good rider, however, and if he had had a saddle horse of his own, properly equipped, with stirrup-straps of the right length, I am sure he could have held his own with the best riders.

President Lincoln seemed to be absolutely devoid of everything in the nature of self-conscious pride in his position as President of the United States. There is no doubt that he fully realized the responsibility attached to his high office, but

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his profound sense of duty overshadowed all sense of official pride. Any one who has ever been much in the presence of men of high rank know how common it is for them to put on the air of official importance, and often the smaller the official, the more important the air. While I never saw President Lincoln belittle the dignity of his office, there was no official austerity about him. He seemed at all times the perfection of natural manhood. This was manifest, both in the discharge of his official duties and in the little everyday incidents that occurred from time to time.

One morning, when the President was coming in from his summer home on horseback, he and the Lieutenant in command of the escort were riding side by side, the escort following in the rear. Between the grounds of the Soldiers' Home and the built-up portion of the city at that time was unoccupied land — city commons — on which, some two or three blocks away, some cows were grazing. Suddenly the President and the Lieutenant turned their horses and

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went cantering over to where those cows were. Of course we followed. The President rode in among the cows, and, pointing to one of them with his long, bony finger said, "You see, just as I told you." I was unable to catch what it was that he wanted the Lieutenant to see. The Lieutenant said, "Yes, I see you are right," and having convinced the Lieutenant of the correctness of his statement, they turned about and started off on a canter to the White House.

As we rode along, I wondered what was the occasion of the President's turning aside to go over and inspect those bony-looking cows. When we had left the President at the White House and gone to our quarters, I said to the Lieutenant, "What was the occasion for the cow inspection on the way in this morning?" He laughed and said, "As we were coming along, the conversation turned upon the peculiar structure of the cow, and the President remarked that the cow is a lop-sided animal, that is, one side is higher than the other. I said no, that I never noticed that one side of a cow is higher than the

Abraham Lincoln

other. 'Well, it is,' said the President, and when he saw those cows feeding over on the commons, he said, 'We will just go over to those cows yonder, and I will show you that I am right about that!''

At that time I thought, what a strange thing that the President of the United States, with a giant war on his hands, a man who during the day would be receiving and sending dispatches concerning the movements of the Army and Navy, and would be in consultation with Cabinet officials and military officers of high rank, could have his attention diverted to the lop-sided structure of a cow, and take the time to turn aside to go over and convince that little Lieutenant that one side of a cow was higher than the other! But in later years I came to recognize that very commonplace element in his make-up as a mark of his greatness. It showed the discipline and poise of his great mind. Under the great strain and burden of his official life, during those strenuous times, he greatly needed some diversion. There was no chance for him to go

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ishing or duck-hunting, or hunting for bear — and I do not mean to reflect upon the President who takes a vacation when he can, for the office of the Presidency is a strenuous one. But there was no vacation for Lincoln, and he knew enough to avail himself of such opportunities as his mornings and evenings gave him away from the Executive Office for a little diversion, however trifling it might seem, as a little relief from the stress and burden of official duties — and that is all that it meant to him.

III
The President's Family

III

The President's Family

NO man was ever more devoted to his family than was President Lincoln.

Only two of Mr. Lincoln's boys were living when our troop went on duty as his bodyguard in 1863, Robert, the oldest, and Thomas, commonly called "Tad," the youngest. Robert was graduated from Harvard in the summer of '64. I remember seeing him soon after his graduation. He was then given a Captain's commission and assigned to duty on General Grant's staff, where he served until the close of the war. He came down to our quarters after his appointment, and made a brief call at the Captain's tent. He presented quite a fine appearance in his new uniform.

Tad was a lively little chap and full of mischief. He often came down to our quarters to call on our officers, and they seemed to enjoy his visits very much. He lisped somewhat, and the boys used to enjoy hearing him talk. He would

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chatter away about something, and until you got used to him, it was hard to tell what he was talking about. When he referred to his father, he always called him "Papa-day." We were told that on one occasion he got his father to sign his name on a blank piece of paper, and then Tad wrote above the signature an order for the use of the Marine Band, a band that was subject only to the President's order. Then Tad assembled all the colored people he could muster in the city of Washington for a parade, and, led by the Marine Band and Tad on his pony, the big parade marched up Pennsylvania Avenue. I do not know whether this was true or not, but it would be just like him.

Mrs. Lincoln was very different in her make-up from her husband, but they seemed to be very congenial to each other. She was an interesting little woman, full of life and activity, and took great interest in her husband's welfare. During the summer and fall months she often rode out with him to and from their summer home, and on other occasions. When the weather was a

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little chilly, the President wore a man's gray shawl over his shoulders, and as they got into their carriage I have often seen her adjust the shawl about his shoulders in an affectionate manner.

An incident which brought out an expression of the President's tender feeling for his children was the burning of the White House stables.

One evening in the month of February, 1864, while on duty at the front door of the White House, I heard an alarm of fire. I looked around in different directions to see if I could discover any indication of fire in that vicinity. In a moment or two I saw a flicker of light around to the east and south of the building. It seemed to come from somewhere between the south end of the Treasury Building and the White House, where the White House stable was located at that time. I was debating in my mind for the moment as to whether or not I ought to go and try to render some assistance (there was nothing in my instructions as to my duties that would forbid my doing so, if I thought best), but about

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the time I located the fire, I heard the fire department coming, and I concluded they could fight a fire better than I could, and that I had better stay where I was.

Just then the front door of the White House flew open with a jerk, and out came the President buttoning his coat around him, and said to me, "Where is the fire, what's burning?" I said, "It seems to be around in the vicinity of the stable." With that he started off on a dog-trot down the steps and along the way leading to the stable. When he started to go to the fire, I thought to myself, "Old fellow, you are the man we are guarding, guess I'll go along." So I struck out on the double-quick and went with him, keeping close to his side; but he took such long strides that his dog-trot was almost a dead run for me.

As soon as we got around where we could see what was burning, we saw that, sure enough, the White House stable was on fire. Quite a crowd had gathered by the time we got there, and the fire department was at work. Mr. Lin-

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coln asked hastily if the horses had been taken out, and when told they had not, he rushed through the crowd and began to break open one of the large doors with his own hands; but the building was full of fire, and none of the horses could be saved. The ponies belonging to the little boys and the goats were all lost in the fire. It was a brick stable, and evidently had been burning for some time before it was discovered.

The Captain and some of the men from our Company, quartered a little way south of that point, appeared on the scene, and the Captain, in company with a dignified gentleman whom I did not know, seeing the President in the crowd, stepped up to him; and I heard the strange gentleman say to him, "Mr. President, this is no place for you," and, slipping his arm through the President's arm, walked with him back to the White House. I accompanied them back and took my place at the front door.

The President seemed very much grieved on account of the fire for some reason, and when we came to find out why he felt so badly about

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it (for I was told he actually wept), we found it was on account of the loss of one of the ponies that had belonged to his son Willie, who had died at the White House two years before. The loss of the pony brought back anew the sorrow he had experienced in the taking away of his little son.

IV
Official Life and Public
Receptions

IV

Official Life and Public Receptions

IN the discharge of his official duties Mr. Lincoln displayed much the same plain and simple manner that he did in the common everyday walks of life. He was laborious and painstaking, giving much attention to minor details. He evidently retired late at night and rose early in the morning. At times, when there was considerable activity at the front, it was a common thing to see him going alone from the White House to the War Department late at night, sometimes as late as midnight, and again early the next morning. At that time there was quite a space between the White House and the War Department on the west end of the same block, a distance of about half an ordinary city block or more. The passageway, paved with brick, was along the north side of a brick wall about four or five feet high, densely shaded by the trees in the park through which the pathway led, and was

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dimly lighted by a few flickering gas jets — that was before the days of electric lights.

On the trial of the conspirators who plotted his assassination, it was brought out that they knew about his habits of going to the War Department alone late at night, and that at one time they had planned to abduct him by seizing him on a dark night while in the shadow of the park, between the White House and the War Department, lifting him over the brick wall, and hurrying him across the Treasury park south of the White House to a vacant house near the Potomac River, where he could be concealed in the cellar until he could be taken across the river and turned over as a prisoner to the Confederates. There are those who think this scheme was practical and could have been carried out, but I doubt it very much. In the first place, the captors would have had the President's great physical powers to contend with, and again, any demonstration of that kind would have been in close proximity to the guards at the White House, and would have brought them quickly

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to his rescue. They might have killed him, but I do not believe they could have seized him and carried him away alive.

The President's public receptions were the times to see him looking his best. When he was well groomed and had on his best clothes, he presented quite a fine appearance. When not on duty, it was our privilege to attend his public receptions, if we wished to do so. In those days public officials and the élite of society were not quite as sensitive as they seem to be in some places nowadays about the presence of a common soldier wearing a soldier's uniform. I must confess, however, that the first time I attended one of the President's receptions, I experienced a good deal of timidity about it.

One evening three or four of us boys concluded we would slick up and take in the President's reception — see what it was like. We stood in the anteroom quite a while watching the dignitaries pass in before we could make up our minds to venture into the presence of the President. That was before we had our sum-

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mer experience with him. The Cabinet Ministers, the Judges of the Supreme Court, Senators and Congressmen, foreign Ambassadors in their dazzling uniforms, all accompanied by their wives, Army and Navy officers of high rank, and the wealth and aristocracy of the city, all in full evening dress, were there. Naturally we boys in the garb of the common soldier felt a little timid in the presence of such an assemblage.

We stood talking for a while with the doorkeeper, whom we had come to know. When one of the boys expressed some reluctance about going in, the doorkeeper said, "Go on in; he would sooner see you boys than all the rest of these people." So we plucked up courage and went in. The President gave us a cordial shake of the hand; we bowed to Mrs. Lincoln and others, and passed on into the large East Room with the rest of the common people. At first it was a little like taking a cold bath when the water is a little extra chilly; but the first douse took off all the chill, and after that we felt quite at home among them.

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It was my privilege to be present at the President's reception, given on the evening of the 8th of March, 1864, when General Grant first put in his appearance at Washington, after his appointment as Lieutenant-General giving him command of the entire Army. The President and General Grant had never met before that time. It was not generally known that General Grant was expected to be there that evening. I was standing near the doorway leading from the President's reception room to the large East Room, when General Grant, with his Chief of Staff, General Rawlins, and Secretary of State William H. Seward, came in a little late. General Grant had come in on the evening train.

From what we had seen of the General's picture in *Harper's Weekly* and other pictorial papers, it was easy to recognize him as soon as we saw him; a man of medium height, square-shouldered, blocky build, brown beard closely trimmed, square, firm-set jaws; a kind and genial eye, looking the man of iron that he was, with a good big heart.

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The President quickly recognized the General as he entered the reception room, and, without waiting to have him formally presented, stepped forward, and taking him by the hand gave it a regular old-fashioned pump-handle shake, saying as he did so, "How are you, General Grant? I am glad to see you." Then, throwing his left arm about the General's shoulders, drew him closely to himself, and, leaning over, said something to him that the others near by did not hear.

General Grant had lots of good fighting mettle in him, but I have often thought how such a reception as that by the President would add to the fighting qualities of a man like Grant.

The word soon passed around that General Grant was present, and then there was a great press of the crowd toward the President's room, and a craning of necks to get a glimpse of the great General; so much so that the General and Secretary Seward could not pass into the East Room. There happened to be a number of our Company present at that time; some had just

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passed in before the General appeared, and some were still in the anteroom, as we did not presume to go in until after we supposed the dignitaries had all passed in.

At the suggestion of some one, the men from our troop who were present formed a wedge-shaped angle. With General Grant and Secretary Seward in the angle, we forced a way through the crowd across the East Room to the east side, where there was a sofa. Seward and Grant stepped upon the sofa, and Seward introduced the General to the crowd, and by dint of effort we got the throng started passing in review; and after a general hand-shake by those who were near where the General stood, the President and Mrs. Lincoln, with others who were receiving with them that evening, appeared in the East Room, and with Mrs. Lincoln on General Grant's arm, while the President and others coupled up, all started off on a grand parade around the room, thus giving everybody present an opportunity to get a good look at the coming hero of the War, while the Marine Band

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played, with much expression, "Hail to the Chief."

This was one of those dress parade occasions I have already mentioned. The contrast between General Grant's uniform and that worn by other military officers present that evening was very marked. The buttons on his coat were placed in the order of a Major-General's uniform, and the shoulder straps bore the Major-General's stars, but the coat was badly faded from exposure and camp usage, and the buttons and shoulder straps were dingy with the smoke and dust and dirt of the field.

I mean no reflection upon those who had nice clean uniforms to wear on such an occasion. I have no doubt but General Grant would have put on a new suit that evening, if he had had one, but history tells us that he went into the Vicksburg campaign with only one suit of clothes, a change of shirts, and a toothbrush; that that was all the baggage he carried during that campaign, and it would seem that he did not have much more than that after the fall of Vicksburg, until

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after he was made Lieutenant-General. When he was called to Washington, upon receiving his appointment, he came direct from the field, probably wearing the only military suit he had.

V

The Fort Stevens Fight

V

The Fort Stevens Fight

THE only battle President Lincoln saw during the War was a little fight that took place at Fort Stevens, one of the defenses of Washington, on the afternoon of the 12th of July, 1864.

During the early part of July, Confederate General Jubal Early made a raid up into Maryland with about twenty thousand men. At first it appeared as though he intended to attack Baltimore, but he suddenly turned toward Washington, and on the 11th of July was immediately in front of Fort Stevens, about six or eight miles north of the city.

At that time every man that could be spared from the defenses of Washington had been sent to the front, and only a few men had been left in the defenses of the Capital. General Lew Wallace, with a small force, threw himself in front of Early's approach and delayed his ad-

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vance somewhat, but he could do nothing more with the small force at his command.

The 11th of July was an anxious day for the President, and for all who knew the situation. During the afternoon of that day the President drove out along the line of some of the forts on the north to investigate the condition of things for himself. I was with the escort that accompanied him on his rounds that day, and it looked to me as though the chances for a scrap were mighty good. I did not see why the Confederates did not make an attack then. Our pickets and the Confederate pickets were firing on each other more or less all the time we were there. Wherever a Union picket would see a Confederate head stick up, he would shoot at it, and *vice versa*, the Johnnies would bang away whenever they saw anything to shoot at. The forts were mounted with heavy guns, calculated to do destructive work, but were manned with only a few men, many of them invalids, and there is no doubt that if Early had made a dash that afternoon he could have broken through our lines and taken the

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city. He would have suffered considerably in doing so, and while he could not have held the city, he could have done a great deal of damage and gained some prestige in favor of the Confederate cause. But he probably did not think it wise to attempt such a hazardous undertaking.

Meanwhile Grant had sent the Sixth Army Corps and part of the Nineteenth from Fortress Monroe on transports up the Potomac River to the relief of Washington, in all about six thousand men, under command of General Wright. A small portion of these reinforcements reached Washington the evening before the main body, which did not reach Washington before the morning of the 12th. The President went down to the wharf to meet them in the morning, to cheer them by his presence. As soon as they could be disembarked and given something to eat, they marched out to the scene of action. There was a general feeling that there would be fighting in the vicinity of Fort Stevens that day.

Immediately after dinner we were ordered out to go with the President. We did not know

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where we were going, but we felt pretty certain that he was going out to see the fight, and we were mighty glad to go with him. Sure enough, he made a bee line for Fort Stevens, about as fast as the old coach horses could take him, and arrived before the whole of the Sixth Corps got there. On arriving at the Fort, the President left his carriage and took his position behind the earthworks of the Fort, which left us at liberty for the time being to put in the time as we saw fit.

To the east of Fort Stevens was Fort Slocum. In front of these forts was a valley of lowland, possibly a mile wide or more. On the rise on the north side of the valley there was a fringe of timber, some places heavy and some places thin and scattering. Early's forces were intrenched in and behind that timber. From the Fort we could see here and there small squads of Johnnies in open spaces, and once in a while an officer on horseback galloping from point to point.

The troops under General Wright marched down into the valley in front of the forts, enter-

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ing the valley east of Fort Slocum and came down in front of the forts westward, until their left flank rested immediately in front of Fort Stevens, forming a line of battle in front of the forts, and there they lay down in the grass awaiting orders.

In order to get a better view of the field, I gave the reins of my horse to one of the men of the escort to hold, and went around to the front of one end of the Fort, and sat down upon a large limb of the abatis in front of the earthworks of the Fort.* I was where I could get a good view of the field, and at the same time was within hearing distance of our bugle call, when it should

* For the benefit of those who are not familiar with the construction of such fortifications, I will say that usually in front of such earthworks there are good-sized trees cut and drawn up with the stump end against the embankment of earth, with the top end extending out and the limbs trimmed and sharpened to sharp points. These bristling points extend along the entire front of the fort. Outside of this abatis, as it is called, was a deep ditch, from which the dirt was taken to build the fort, so that in case of an assault by the enemy, it would be difficult to charge over that ditch and against the abatis, and while the enemy would be making its way over the ditch and through the abatis, the men in the forts are supposed to make it warm for the fellows making the assault.

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be given. While sitting there, I heard something crack among the dry brush near me, and I looked around to see what it was, but could not see anything. Presently I heard another snap in the brush on the other side, and I looked in that direction, but did not see anything. I thought it might be a rat burrowing there. Presently I heard something strike the earthworks back of me and above my head with a dull thud. I looked up and saw a little fresh dirt rolling down, and it dawned on me that they were Confederate bullets that were playing around in the brush near where I was sitting, but it never occurred to me that they might be shooting at me — and I don't know that they were — but if they were, they never touched me. The wonder to me was, where those shots came from; I could not see any firing from the enemy's line, but down in the valley, about halfway between our lines and the enemy's line, nestling among a bunch of trees, was a large, square, brick farmhouse, with a hip-roof and a cupola on top of it — a style of architecture a good deal in vogue in those days

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— and the shots seemed to come from that direction. It turned out that there were some Confederate sharpshooters secreted in that house, and from there were firing at our men in and about the Fort whenever they got sight of one. They severely wounded an officer in Fort Stevens while standing near the President. I was in plain view, but was so interested in watching the men forming in front, and waiting to see what would happen, that I paid no more attention to the occasional cracking in the brush. In a little while, however, a gun from our Fort threw a couple of shells into that house and set it on fire, and we could see the sharpshooters running from the house and scampering back to their lines like scared mice.

All was quiet for a little while, and I was anxiously waiting to see what was next on the program. Presently a messenger came over from Fort Slocum on horseback at high speed, and an officer from Fort Stevens stepped out to receive his message; and I heard the messenger say, “We will fire the signal gun, and when we do, you let

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go." The messenger whirled about and went back to Fort Slocum. You can imagine how anxiously I waited to hear that signal gun. I did not have to wait long. In a few minutes we heard the boom of a Parrott gun over at Fort Slocum, and then the big guns at Fort Stevens broke loose, one of them only about ten feet above my head, and you would think all creation had let go! The earth trembled; little limbs from standing trees in front of the Fort rained down like hail, and the air was filled with smoke. At the same time that the signal gun was fired, the men in line of battle in front rose up and, with a yell, started on a run toward the Confederate lines and opened fire. The Confederates returned the fire, and the roar of cannon and noise of battle was on.

The fight commenced about half past four o'clock in the afternoon, and kept up until almost sundown. As a battle scene it was an interesting sight. The strength of the Sixth Army Corps was not sufficient to attack and rout the Confederates, and the only thing it could do was to fight under cover of the guns at the forts; con-

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sequently, after the battle began, its line of battle settled down immediately in front of the forts and along the base of the ridge on which the forts were located; while the Confederates had their firing line along the edge of the timber on the opposite side of the valley, and in that position kept up a steady fire for over two hours. From where I sat I could see two distinct lines of smoke from the two firing lines. While this firing from the infantry was going on, the guns at the forts engaged in a little target practice by throwing shells, not so frequently as to keep the air so filled with smoke that they could not see where they were shooting, and yet, by the different forts along the line firing alternately, the cannonading was kept up pretty steadily.

Looking toward Fort Slocum on the east from where I sat, and by keeping my eye in that direction, at times I could see the sparks fly from the fuse of the shells thrown from that Fort as they went on their rainbow course toward the mark of the gunner's aim. One shell especially seemed to find its mark with great accuracy. From our

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Fort we could see a little knot of Johnnies, which seemed to be about the size of a Corporal's Guard, in the middle of the roadway that crossed the valley from south to north passing out over the hill occupied by the Confederates. I could not see with the naked eye what they were doing there, and I never learned as to that, but one of the gunners at Fort Slocum took them as his target, and threw a shell at them, and it appeared to drop down and explode in the midst of that squad. It was a good shot. The men and officers at Fort Stevens were evidently watching it, and, when they saw the shell from the other fort hit the mark, they sent up a shout. When the smoke of the exploded shell cleared away, we saw no more Johnnies in the middle of the road. That shell cleared the way. Beyond that I never heard what happened. I knew this much, however, that, as a choice of locations, I would very much prefer to be where I was than to have been where they were.

As the sun was sinking in the west, the Confederates ceased firing and beat a retreat. Our

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bugle sounded, which meant that the President was ready to return to the city.

As compared with the great battles of the War, the battle of Fort Stevens was a small affair, but it was a very important one, as it doubtless saved the city of Washington from a dangerous attack. We lost quite a number of men in that engagement, and a little spot on that field on which those men lost their lives was, by Act of Congress, made a little National Cemetery ; and there the men who had the honor to die that day under the eye of their Chief Executive lie buried.

VI

Second Inaugural Address

VI

Second Inaugural Address

THE morning of the day of Mr. Lincoln's second inauguration was dark and drizzly, but a few moments before he was to deliver his address, the mist and the clouds cleared away, and the sun shone out bright and warm. The atmosphere seemed unusually clear. Thousands of people had gathered in front of the large platform erected for the occasion at the east front of the Capitol to hear the President speak. It was my privilege to sit on my horse only a few yards from President Lincoln when he delivered his famous address.

The dark and doubtful periods of the War had passed, and the President had gained the perfect confidence of all loyal people, North and South. They had come to recognize the justice and wisdom of many of his acts for which he had been severely criticized. The prejudice which had existed in the minds of many, against the emancipation of the slaves during the early part of the

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War, had passed away, the people had settled down to the conviction that the War was a fight to the finish, and they were ready to stand by the President to the end. They anticipated that the President would voice this sentiment in his inaugural address, and they were eagerly waiting to hear this expression of his purpose. They were not disappointed.

At the appointed hour the President, accompanied by Chief Justice Chase and a large committee of dignitaries, came down the Capitol steps to the speaker's stand. After the thunderous applause that greeted his appearance had subsided to almost breathless silence, the President began his short and incisive address. His strong, tenor voice rang over that vast assemblage, so clear that he could be distinctly heard to the outer limits of the crowd. They seemed to hang on his words as though they were meat and drink, and in a large national sense they were. I shall never forget the profound impression made by that part of his address wherein he referred to the continuation of the War, in which

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he said, "Fondly do we hope — fervently do we pray — that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

A suppressed feeling of supreme satisfaction swept over that vast audience. I could see men all around me exchanging side glances with approving nods, and could hear in suppressed voices such expressions as, "That's the stuff! That's the stuff!" And when he had concluded the last paragraph, beginning, "With malice toward none; with charity for all," which fell like a benediction from heaven, the shout of the people seemed to rise to the very sky.

Soon after the President concluded his address, he entered his carriage, and the procession

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started up Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House, the escort from our Company following next to his carriage. Shortly after we turned onto Pennsylvania Avenue, west of the Capitol, I noticed the crowd along the street looking intently, and some were pointing to something in the heavens toward the south. I glanced up in that direction, and there in plain view, shining out in all her starlike beauty, was the planet Venus. It was a little after midday at the time I saw it, possibly near one o'clock; the sun seemed to be a little west of the meridian, the star a little east. It was a strange sight. I never saw a star at that time in the day before or since. The superstitious had many strange notions about it, but of course it was simply owing to the peculiarly clear condition of the atmosphere and the favorable position of the planet at that time. The President and those who were with him in the carriage noticed the star at the same time.

VII

Fall of Richmond and
Surrender of Lee

VII

Fall of Richmond and Surrender of Lee

THE rapid movements of our armies and the unity of their action in the spring campaign of 1865 brought the War to a speedy close.

On the fourth of April, just one month from the day he delivered his famous inaugural address, Mr. Lincoln had the privilege of entering Richmond, the Confederate capital. Five days later Lee surrendered to Grant. It was Sunday; the President had just returned to Washington from his visit to the front, when he received a message announcing Lee's surrender, but this intelligence was not made known to the public until the next morning.

A short time before this I had been given charge of a small detail from our Company, and was assigned to duty at General Hancock's headquarters, some three or four blocks west of the War Department. Under a special Act of Congress, General Hancock was at that time en-

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gaged in recruiting and organizing what was known as the Veteran Reserve Corps, which was to be used for the defense of Washington.

On Monday morning, the 10th of April, I was standing in front of Hancock's headquarters, and I heard a band playing and loud cheering down in the neighborhood of the War Department. As I listened, the cheering became louder, and it seemed to me as though there were two or three bands playing at once, and each one playing a different air. I started down the street briskly to see what it all meant. On the way I met an elderly man, and as I came up to him he began swinging his cane and shouting, "Hurrah for the Union!" I said, "So say I, but what is all this racket about?" "Haven't you heard the news?" said he. "No," said I, "nothing since the fall of Richmond." "Why," said he, "Lee has surrendered! The War is over! The Union is saved, and slavery has gone forever from this fair land!"

It was a spontaneous outburst of eloquence from the old patriot, which I enjoyed very

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much, and I joined him in an exchange of hearty congratulations. He shook my hand vigorously as he said, "You are a stranger to me, but you are wearing the Government blue, and that is enough for me."

With that I hastened on down the street to participate in the joy of the occasion. Business in all the departments was practically suspended for the time being, and everybody was out for a good time. A large crowd had congregated in front of the War Department, and Secretaries Stanton and Seward and Vice-President Andrew Johnson and other members of the Cabinet were there making little congratulatory speeches, interspersed with national airs by the band. It was amusing to see those dignitaries that morning; they played like boys. It was one of those glorious occasions which in spirit puts everybody who is of the same mind on a high level.

The crowd would call for speeches from first one and then another, and everyone seemed to want some one else to talk. They were "in honor preferring one another." Seward was be-

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ing loudly called for when I got there, but he hung back and wanted Stanton to talk; but Stanton, being the larger and stronger man physically, got behind Seward, and taking him by the arms above the elbows, walked him up to the front of the veranda and said to him, "Now you talk." Obeying the order of his military superior, the great Secretary made a little speech in his happiest vein of wit and humor applicable to the occasion.

Vice-President Andrew Johnson was called for, and he made one of his characteristic vindictive speeches. Among other things he said: "I know what I would do with the leaders of the rebel host, if I were President; I would arrest them as traitors, try them as traitors, and, by the Eternal, I would hang them as traitors." The tone and temper of these remarks were in marked contrast to those uttered by President Lincoln a few moments later.

Some one in the crowd shouted, "Now for the White House!" and, led by the band, the crowd made a rush in that direction, and called

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for the President. He appeared at an upper window west of the portico. His appearance was the signal for wild and enthusiastic cheering and cries of "Speech! Speech!" He raised his hand and all became quiet. He said, "My friends, you call for a speech, but I cannot make a speech at this time; undue importance might be given to what I would say. I must take time to think. If you will come here to-morrow evening, I will have something to say to you." With loud cheering and waving of hats the crowd shouted, "We'll come!" Then the President said, "You have a band with you, and there is one piece of music I have always liked, which heretofore it has not seemed proper to make use of in the North, but now, by virtue of my prerogative as President of the United States and Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, I declare it contraband of war and our lawful prize; I ask the band to play 'Dixie.'" Again the crowd went wild, and the band struck up "Dixie" with all the wind power it had.

Meanwhile the news of Lee's surrender had

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reached the line of fortifications forming the defenses of Washington, and the big guns at the different forts, at Arlington Heights, and at all the other heights surrounding the city, began to boom in all directions. The day was largely given up to music, marching processions, speeches, and the roar of heavy artillery.

When the crowd left the White House, I went back to Hancock's headquarters, and, finding all business there suspended, I saddled my mare and went the rounds of the city to witness the people's joy. I knew I could see more on horseback than I could on foot. It was a great day.

The next evening a large crowd gathered in front of the White House to hear the President's promised speech, and it was my privilege to be with them. That evening he appeared at an upper window east of the portico, a place where he had often appeared before during the War to greet military organizations with words of cheer when they called at the White House, as they oftentimes did when passing through the

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city on their way to the front. The speech delivered by the President was read from manuscript, and has become an item of history. I am glad to know it has been published with other choice bits of literature in convenient form for use in our public schools. It was his last public utterance, and I prize it as a priceless memory that I heard it as it fell from his lips. Though only a brief outline — merely suggestive — it is especially valuable as an expression of the thought that was in his mind at that time upon the great question of reconstruction of the Southern State Governments, and the magnanimous spirit in which he was then considering that question.

VIII
Lincoln's Assassination

VIII

Lincoln's Assassination

THE grand illumination on the night of the thirteenth concluded the three or four days and nights of celebrating the great victory, and everybody seemed to feel like taking a rest and beginning to think soberly. I know I did. I felt that what I wanted about that time more than anything else was a good night's sleep, for the past few days and nights had been noisy and almost sleepless ones.

The fourteenth day of April was warm, calm, and beautiful, an ideal spring day. All Nature seemed to bask in the warm sunlight of assured peace, and the general public had settled down to dream of a glorious future for our reunited country. But, oh! how suddenly was all that joy and gladness changed to sorrow and sadness. That night the great President, the idol of every loyal American heart, fell by the foul hand of an assassin.

I and the men who were with me retired rea-

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sonably early that night, for we were all tired, and it seemed to me that I had just gotten into a sound sleep, when I thought I heard some one call my name from outside the building. I turned my head and listened, and again I heard some one call, "Sergeant Stimmel!" I jumped up and put my head out of the window, and asked what was wanted. The man who called said hastily, "Lincoln and Seward have been killed." Then he turned and went down the street as fast as his legs could carry him. I recognized his voice and knew it was one of the men from our Company. If I had been struck a stunning blow in the face, I could not have been more dazed than I was for a moment on receiving that announcement.

The other men were aroused somewhat by hearing me speak to some one on the outside, and inquired what was the matter. I said, "McClellan says" (that was the name of the man who brought the word) "that Lincoln and Seward have been killed." I said, "Get up boys quickly, we may be needed." Every one jumped into his clothes and buckled on his equipment,

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and down to the stable we went and saddled our horses, almost in less time, it seemed to me, than it takes to tell it. As we saddled our horses not much was said by any one; it was too horrible to talk about. As we rode out on the Avenue, the men said to me, "You lead off, and wherever you go we will follow." Our thought at the first was that there was a mob riot in the city, instigated by a revengeful spirit of the enemy, and the anger of these men was so intense on hearing that the President had been killed, and thinking it was the work of a mob, it would have been a relief to them to have had the privilege of plunging into a fight.

We rode at full speed to the White House, but all was quiet there. We then started around to our Company quarters, and, as we were passing down the Avenue in front of the Treasury Building, a policeman hailed us, who, knowing that we belonged to the President's escort, told us that the President had been shot at Ford's Theater, and that our Company had gone there. We hastened to that place; the street was blocked

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with people. We found our Company, and, soon after our arrival, we were ordered to clear the street for one block in front of the house where the President lay. The President had been taken to a private dwelling immediately across the street from the Theater. Having cleared the street, we remained there on guard the balance of the night, admitting only those who we knew had to do with the care of the President.

It was an awful night. To be awakened out of a sound sleep and be brought face to face with a condition so shocking made it hard for me to realize that it was so. All night I rode slowly up and down the street in front of that house. Sometimes it seemed to me like an awful nightmare and that I must be dreaming. Sometimes I would pinch myself and wonder if I was really awake and on duty, so hard was it for me to realize the fact that President Lincoln was lying in that house in a dying condition. We were relieved about seven o'clock the next morning, and it was not until after I had had breakfast and taken a sleep, that I was able to fully realize the awful

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fact. The President died at 7.20 o'clock that morning.

During that day one of my comrades — my bunk-mate — was riding down street, and he met another cavalryman from another troop, a man he did not know, and the fellow was weeping. They stopped and had a passing word about the sad event of the night before, and, speaking of the President's death, the stranger said to my comrade, "It probably means more to me than it does to you; he signed an order that saved me from being shot." When we recount how he saved many from being shot, I often think how the words that were applied to our Saviour as he hung upon the cross, might be applied to Lincoln, though in a different sense: "He saved others; himself he cannot save."

I am frequently asked, "Where was Lincoln's Bodyguard the night of his assassination, and how did it come that they let him be assassinated?" In reply to that I have to say that President Lincoln flatly refused to have a military guard with him when he went to places of enter-

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tainment or to church in the city. He said that when he went to such places, he wanted to go as free and unencumbered as other people, and there was no military guard with him the night of his assassination. The only person that could have protected him at the theater the night of his assassination was a civilian who was employed at the White House, known as the carriage footman. When the President went out with his family, and sometimes with invited guests, to places of entertainment, this footman would go along and ride on the seat with the driver. When they reached their destination, he would hop down and render such assistance as a handy man could. The President took him into the theater with him that night and gave him a chair at the door of the box occupied by the President and Mrs. Lincoln and their guests, with instructions that, if anybody wished to see the President in any emergency, he could send in his card, and he would go out or would have him come in to see him. After the play had proceeded some little time, the man at the door could only see a small

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portion of the stage, and he became anxious to see more of the play, and moved his chair up away from the door, leaving the space behind him vacant. Consequently, the assassin passed into the President's box without being observed.

At the time of Mr. Lincoln's funeral I was on duty at General Hancock's headquarters, and was not with the troop that accompanied his remains to the Capitol. I witnessed the cortège leave the White House, but did not go to the Capitol to view his remains as he lay in state. I think most of the boys went, but I told them I did not want to see him dead ; I wanted to remember him as I saw him the evening of April 11th, when he made that last public speech from the window of the White House.

IX

The Human Lincoln

IX

The Human Lincoln

I HAVE told you something of the Lincoln I knew. I wish I could bring before you as I see him a tall, homely, rugged, kindly, lonely man. Often I have seen him walking alone in his characteristic manner, with his hands clasped behind his back, his shoulders slightly bent, and on his face a look so sad that my own eyes filled as I looked at him. Often would the words of the prophet come into my mind, "A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." At times he seemed to be weighed down with the burden of the Nation. This Nation's burden was his burden. When a battle was reported, even though it were a victory, the sorrow which attended it, the widow's wail and the orphan's cry, found an echo in his soul and seemed almost to crush him.

There were those who, during his administration, looked upon Mr. Lincoln's kind and sympathetic nature as a weakness. But Lincoln was no weakling. If Jesus' weeping at the tomb of

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Lazarus, or restoring the widow's dead son alive to his mother, were evidences of weakness in Him, then were Lincoln's many acts of kindness and sympathy evidence of weakness on his part. Nay, verily, his acts of kindness were the manifestations of his noble manhood, the evidence of his great strength of character.

Never did I see Lincoln so full of grief or of his own affairs that he was not ready to sympathize with all who needed him, especially if a child called for help. I think he never passed by a child without a smile, and some way, in spite of sad eyes and heavy brows, the children always took to him. One morning, when the President came over from the War Department, some little school children were playing on the front steps of the White House. He stopped and had a word of pleasantry with them, took one or two of their books and glanced through them, and while he did so, the children crowded around him as if he had been their father.

The story of the little girl interceding with Lincoln for her brother, and the story of the mo-

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ther pleading with him for her son, have been related many times. I once spoke on Lincoln at Delaware, Ohio, at which time I related the stories referred to. After the lecture, a middle-aged lady came up to shake hands with me. Her eyes were brimming with tears, as with trembling lips she said, "He signed an order that saved my father from being shot."

The President was not a gloomy man. He was always hopeful, and the wit and humor which held his audiences spellbound in the old days of the Douglas debates stayed with him. He always had a story suited to the occasion, and there was not a man in our troop who did not have a hatful of anecdotes to tell of their great Commander.

There is no instance on record where Lincoln ever acted from personal resentment toward any individual or group who had injured him or offered him an insult in his official capacity. He was not insensible to these insults, but he was too great to be influenced by them. In matters of State his policies were often misunderstood,

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but by his firm stand he maintained the honor and integrity of his Country and gained the applause of the civilized world.

The grandest thing on earth is a sublime human character. Abraham Lincoln was that type of man. It has been well said that the more human we are, the more divine we become. Lincoln was divinely human. He was a great patriot and a wise statesman; but in his integrity of character he was greater than anything he ever said or did.

Lincoln was not great simply because he happened to be President of the United States during the most critical period of our Nation's history, or because he issued the Emancipation Proclamation that liberated four millions of slaves. The Presidency during the Civil War was an opportunity for him to demonstrate his marvelous wisdom and sagacity in statecraft, but he had all the well-trained elements of greatness in him before he had the opportunity. It is an old saying, "Get thy spindle and distaff ready, and God will find thee flax." Lincoln had his spindle and

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distaff ready, and when the opportune flax came, he was ready to spin.

In early life he had few advantages, but he made the most of what he had. His life was a continual struggle, but he was an overcomer, and it made him a hero. He was faithful over the few things that he had, and God made him ruler over many things. His struggles and the use he made of the few advantages he had developed in him a genius in the economy of resources; this in turn gave him intellectual power and made him a thinker. By abstemious habits and persistent effort in study and thought, he acquired great breadth of mental vision. His reading was along the line that inspired him with patriotic ardor and high ideals.

It has been said that Lincoln was an uneducated man. He may not have been trained in much of the technical learning of the schools, but in point of mental development and mental discipline, the chief aim and object of education, he was highly educated. A distinguished educator has said, "A man is educated when he is mas-

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ter of himself and master of his task." Lincoln was, in a very marked degree, master of himself and master of his task. He steadfastly adhered to that which he conceived to be right, standing firmly by his honest convictions, and thus developed great strength of moral character. His high regard for the common rights of man made him humane, kind, and sympathetic. Thus in matters needing sympathy, he was as kind and gentle as a loving mother, but in matters of State, where principles of right were involved, he was as firm and immovable as the everlasting hills. His head and heart were a unit.

We are told that when the great temple of Minerva was erected at Athens, all sculptors were invited to compete in a statue for its dome. On the day of the award, a noted artist brought a life-sized statue of Minerva, so beautiful that it was received with loud acclaim; but as it was raised to its place, it grew smaller and smaller, until it seemed a mere speck against the sky. Then a statue, the work of a poor mechanic, was unveiled, huge and rough hewn; but as it was

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raised aloft, its rugged features disappeared and it became more and more comely, until, reaching the pinnacle of the dome, it took the very semblance of the goddess and seemed animate with life.

So it is with Lincoln. It has taken over fifty years for us to get far enough away from the rugged features of his earthly career to enable us to see the beauty and majesty of his sublime character.

To me it was much to have lived for nearly a year and a half in close touch with a man like Lincoln. I was barely twenty-one when I joined his bodyguard, but throughout my long life I have been deeply grateful for the providence which gave me such glimpses of one of Earth's grandest heroes, one of her noblest martyrs, one of the finest specimens of manhood which God, the Creator, has ever produced: ABRAHAM LINCOLN, PATRIOT! STATESMAN! GENTLEMAN!

THE END



